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ABSTRACT

A 1973 study of 341 Mexican American nonmetropolitan high school sophomores in South Texas and 300 Mexican American sophomores and seniors in El Paso high schools and a 1978-79 replication study of 89 metropolitan and 65 nonmetropolitan Mexican American youth explored the difference in their Spanish-English language usage patterns. Both studies indicated that nonmetro youth used Spanish more often with families than did metro youth. However, findings from the two sets of comparisons were in direct conflict in terms of relative predominance of Spanish in all other interaction contexts. The 1973 study indicated that metro and nonmetro youth differed little in their use of Spanish versus English language mass media; the 1978-79 study indicated that, although metro and nonmetro youth did not differ in use of Spanish language radio programs, the nonmetro respondents' use of Spanish reading materials and television was less. The 1973 study indicated that nonmetro boys tended to retain predominant use of Spanish outside of interaction with parents while others did not. The 1978-79 study indicated that both metro and nonmetro girls spoke more English with family and friends than did boys. (CM)

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TYPE OF PLACE OF RESIDENCE AND BILINGUAL LANGUAGE USE PATTERNS AMONG MEXICAN AMERICAN YOUTH IN TEXAS: TWO METRO-NONMETRO COMPARISONS

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to explore empirically the extent to which metropolitan and nonmetropolitan Mexican American youth vary in their Spanish - English spoken language patterns, using data from prior reports of two different but comparable studies I have been involved in over the past decade. One of these studies involved a comparison of information from Mexican American high school sophomores from nonmetropolitan South Texas and from El Paso in 1973 through a collaborative effort between Texas A&M and New Mexico State researchers (Venegas and Kuvlesky, 1975).[1] The other study, completed in the winter of 1978-1979, consists of the Texas A&M study of Mexican American family members in a nonmetropolitan county (Brooks) and a metropolitan county (Cameron) in deep South Texas (Kuvlesky, 1981). This study is described in the paper by (Ballard, 1981) being presented at these meetings.

Language Patterns And Quality Of Life

From the perspective of many Mexican Americans the use of Spanish is an important aspect of quality of life. It is probably the key component in differentiating their subculture and the critical integrating component of their informal associations. To the extent a Mexican American subculture exists, use of the Spanish language in some form to some extent will be a clearly observable pattern. And, to the extent that Mexican Americans value the right to cultural pluralism — to be bicultural and to preserve valued aspects of their Mexican heritage — to that extent will use of the Spanish language be defined by them as very important to their life satisfactions; in other words, a very important consideration in realizing a good life

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[1] The study is described in detail in the refrence cited, and anyone desiring this paper will be sent a copy upon request.

(i.e., high "quality of life"). Do Mexican Americans so oriented have a better opportunity to realize their ends in this regard in metro vs. non-metro settings? This research hopes to contribute to answering this question.

Review of Past Studies

A few studies have been done on the retention of Spanish by Mexican Americans (Skrabanek, 1970; Patella and Kuvlesky, 1973). A report of findings from an earlier - 1967 - Texas study of the nonmetropolitan area studied here (involving the same age grouping) indicated that almost all Mexican American youth can speak Spanish, that boys consistently use Spanish in speaking more than girls, that the amount of Spanish used varies by social context, and that Spanish radio programs are utilized frequently but not Spanish language mass literature (Patella and Kuvlesky, 1975). Prior analysis of the ST-73 data indicate that these patterns have persisted with little change (Patella and Kuvlesky, 1975). No comparable data on a similarly located metropolitan, Mexican American population has been reported to provide a basis to evaluate the extent to which these findings can be generalized. However, evidence exists to indicate that Mexican American youth from Los Angeles and Spanish American youth from rural Southern Colorado speak Spanish less than the nonmetropolitan South Texas youth (Kuvlesky, 1973). However, comparability of these studies is hindered by the fact that they were carried out at different times and due to marked variability in instruments and procedures.

As far as we know directly comparable studies of language patterns of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan Mexican American youth — carried out at the same time, using identical instruments, and replicating as exactly as possible instruments and operations — have not been reported. Our tight

collaboration in carrying out the El Paso - 73 and South Texas - 73 studies and our more recent 78-79 study provided us with the potential for such comparisons. We thus have a capability to determine whether or not metropolitan and nonmetropolitan youth from the "border areas" of Texas differ in certain patterns of language use.

Research Objectives

A set of questions structured to elicit indications of frequency of use of Spanish over various informal contexts of social interaction and in use of mass media were included as parts of the questionnaires used in both studies — these are described in Patella and Kuvlesky (1973) and in even more detail in Patella (1971). The data thus obtained were utilized to develop metropolitan-nonmetropolitan comparative analysis by sex in refrence to the following:

(1) Spanish Speaking Patterns
   (a) With parents in the home.
   (b) With close friends in the neighborhood.
   (c) With close friends in school, outside of class.

(2) Use of Mass Media
   (a) Radio
   (b) Newspapers and magazines

The findings to be reported below provide a very meager, first step toward attempting to answer the question of whether or not metropolitan and nonmetropolitan Mexican American youth differ generally in their language usage patterns.

Our specific research objectives will be to determine whether or not Mexican American teen-age boys and girls living in a large metropolitan area differ from their counterparts living in isolated, relatively small nonmetropolitan places in refrence to the bilingual usage patterns described above.

The Respondents

The 1973 South Texas study ("ST") involved 341 Mexican American sophomores from Dimmit, Maverick, Starr, and Zapata Counties of Texas. The replication of this study in El Paso involved a 5% sample of sophomores and seniors in El Paso high schools, producing 300 Mexican American youth as respondents.[2] Detailed descriptions of the study areas, observation methods, the respondents and instruments and measures utilized can be obtained from Patella and Kuvlesky, (1975) and Venegas and Kuvlesky, (1975).

A description of the 1978-1979 study is given by Ballard (1981: 4-6) in his paper for this session. This study involves 89 youth from Cameron County (metro) and 65 from Brooks County (nonmetro). The instruments used here were almost identical to those used in the 1973 studies — they were based on them. The average age of youth in this study was between 15-16 years, roughly comparable to the average age of the 1973 ST respondents.

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[2] Venegas (1973) reports little difference between sophomores and seniors on status projection elements.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The 1973 "ST" - "EP" Findings

(Tables 1 and 2)

An overview of the comparative findings from the analysis of language usage patterns of the nonmetropolitan, South Texas youth and their counterparts is given in Tables 1 and 2.

One can observe quite clearly from the summary data on predominance of use of either Spanish or English in speaking over the three contexts studied that most of the marked variability observed by metropolitan-nonmetropolitan place of residence is attributable to the nonmetropolitan boys from South Texas relative to their heavy Spanish language dominance (Table 1). This pattern also is related to another general metropolitan-nonmetropolitan variation observed — the rather substantial sex differences for South Texas youth and the remarkable lack of these for the El Paso respondents. In conclusion, most of the variability by both metropolitan-nonmetropolitan residence and sex appears to be due to the heavy reliance on Spanish by the nonmetropolitan, South Texas boys, particularly in refrence to interaction with friends in social contacts outside the home.

Significant place of residence differenced in use of Spanish language mass media occurs only in refrence to listening to radio and this difference is not very substantial — South Texas youth slightly more often relied on Spanish (Table 2). About one-fourth of the South Texas youth listened to more Spanish language than English programs as compared with less than one out of 10 El Paso youth.

Differences by sex status were inconsequential in use of Spanish in radio listening. However, girls tended to indicate use of Spanish much more

frequently than boys, in reading Spanish language newspapers and magazines in both El Paso and nonmetropolitan South Texas. In general, the metropolitan and nonmetropolitan youth studied differed little in their language patterns relative to use of Spanish vs. English language mass media.

A very consistent pattern of variation by social context was observed regardless of sex and place of residence. The dominance of Spanish in speaking decreased and conversely that of English use increased as the social context moved progressively away from the home, to the neighborhood, and finally to the school. In all cases, the most dramatic shift takes place between talking with parents in the home and speaking with friends in the neighborhood. It can be concluded that this situational variation is not influenced much by place of residence except that nonmetropolitan boys did not indicate the magnitude of variation by social context indicated by the three other groupings. The fact that the nonmetropolitan boys tended to retain predominant use of Spanish outside of interaction with parents, while others did not, is one of the most intriguing findings to come to light from the South Texas study area — particularly boys — have indicated more use of Spanish in 1973 as compared with 1967 (Patella and Kuvlesky, 1975). Does this mean that the rural boys were feeling the pressure to demonstrate "ethnic identity" to increasingly greater extent than others?

Table 1. A Comparison of Percentages of Boys and Girls From Each Sample Using Spanish or English Predominantly in Each Social Context.

Social Context	% Speaking Mostly Spanish				% Speaking Mostly English			
	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	EP	ST	EP	ST	EP	ST	EP	ST
	- - - - - - - % - - - - - - -				- - - - - - - % - - - - - - -			
Parents	51	68	52	45	16	10	13	6
Friends-Neighbors	26	59	26	21	28	13	27	26
Friends-School	19	55	19	18	31	19	29	29

Study comparisons (EP-ST) underlined were observed to be statistically significant at the .05 level of P, according to results of x^2 tests reported earlier.

Table 2. A Comparison of Amount of Use of Spanish With Types of Mass Media For Two Samples of Mexican American Youth By Sex.

A. Radio Amount of Spanish	Male[1] EP	Male[1] ST	Female[2] EP	Female[2] ST	Total EP	Total ST
	%					
None	35	21	23	24	29	23
Some	56	53	67	51	62	52
More ½	8	18	7	18	7	18
All	1	8	3	7	2	7
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

B. Newspapers & Magazines	Male[3] EP	Male[3] ST	Female[4] EP	Female[4] ST	Total EP	Total ST
	%					
None	56	67	38	45	47	55
Some	43	30	49	44	45	38
More ½	1	2	12	8	7	5
All	0	1	1	3	1	2
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100

1 $x^2 = 20.93$ D.F. = 3 P = <.001
2 $x^2 = 13.16$ D.F. = 3 P = >.001, .01
3 $x^2 = 6.57$ D.F. = 3 P = >.08, <.09
4 $x^2 = 4.14$ D.F. = 3 P = >.2, <.3

1978-1979, BROOKS COUNTY-CAMERON COUNTY FINDINGS

METRO - NONMETRO DIFFERENCES

The patterning of differences in use of Spanish vs. English in varying social contexts between metro and nonmetro youth is very marked and consistent across gender groupings. The major findings are as follows (Table 3):

(1) As was true in the 1973 studies, nonmetro youth used mostly Spanish more often and, conversely, predominantly English less often than their metro counterparts.

(2) Unlike the findings from the 1973 studies, in every social context outside the family the exact opposite pattern of differences from that described above was observed; and, the differences are marked in family interactions.

In conclusion the metro youth markedly used Spanish more than the nonmetro youth in every social context except in speaking to family members, where the converse pattern existed.

The 1973 and 1978-1979 comparisons are in agreement in supporting the generalization that nonmetro youth, as compared with metro youth, use Spanish more often with families. However, the findings from the two sets of comparisons are in direct conflict in terms of relative predominance of Spanish in all other interaction contexts. This might be explained by the difference in historical time of the two studies or in some unique aspects of one or another of the study areas utilized in one of the time periods.

In the 1978-79 study metro and nonmetro youth did not differ in use of Spanish language radio programs: roughly half the youth in both settings listened to some Spanish programs but few listened to these most of the time. However, in refrence to reading materials and T.V. use, the nonmetro respondents' use of Spanish was dramatically less than that of the metro youth (Table 4). Again, these findings do not fit with those from the 1973 studies. As with spoken language outside the family, the difference between the two sets of findings is the greater relative use of Spanish by the youth from the metro

area, especially in reading magazines and papers. Obviously, it appears that the metro students have a greater degree of written language fluency in Spanish perhaps, due to greater number of first generation migrants in the metro study area than the nonmetro. This seems to be supported by the youths own evaluations of these abilities (see Table 6).

Table 3. Metro-Nonmetro Comparison of Mexican American Youths' Spoken Language Use Patterns by Gender, 1978-1979

	---- Language Patterns ----							
	--- Language Patterns ---							
	Predominately Spanish				Predominately English			
	Boys		Girls		Boys		Girls	
Spoken Language	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM
Family Members	34	46	26	58	0	17	11	26
Close Friends In Neighborhood	39	26	40	16	7	43	22	63
Outside Neighborhood	39	23	56	21	30	57	24	63

Table 4. Use of Spanish Language Mass Media Among Mexican American Youth by Metro-Nonmetro Residence, 1978-1979.

	Radio		Magazines & Newspapers		TV	
Spanish Language Use	M	NM	M	NM	M	NM
None	43	45	48	88	34	73
Some	44	44	39	8	48	23
More Than Half	10	11	8	0	12	4

GENDER PATTERNS

Data available from the 1978 Texas study contributing to NC-128 (Brooks and Cameron Counties) were organized for gender comparisons in a recent paper and are reproduced here in Tables 5 and 6 (Kuvlesky, 1981). Again, for the most part in spoken language use patterns gender differences among metro youth are not substantial. One noteworthy finding in this regard, however, indicates that girls more frequently relied on English with family and friends in the neighborhood than did boys. The same gender pattern existed for the nonmetro youth. Outside of this observation gender differences among the nonmetro youth were not strongly patterned as they were in the 1973 studies. To the extent there is a difference in gender patterns of nonmetro and metro youth apparent in the 1978 data, girls are using more English than boys: a finding consistent in direction, but not magnitude of variation, with the 1973 data.

In refrence to mass media use of Spanish gender differences were generally slight to none existent (See "Part B" of Table 6). This lack of strong gender patterning is consistent with the 1973 results.

SUBJECTIVE ORIENTATIONS TOWARD SPANISH

Several indicators of subjective evaluations of use of Spanish were explored in the 1978 NC-128 study for which data was not available in 1973: the respondents' evaluations of their abilities to use Spanish ("Part A" of Table 6) and their desire to teach their children Spanish well ("Part C" of Table 6).

Metro youth, boys and girls, consistently more oftened judged themselves having good ability in Spanish than did their nonmetro counterparts: the differences are dramatic in refrence to writing; also, in both residence areas

Table 5. Use of Spanish By Mexican American Boys and Girls: South Texas, 1978-1979.

Language Pattern Used	Family Members		Close Friends In Neighborhood		Others Outside Neighborhood	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	%					
A. Nonmetro						
English	17	26	43	63	57	63
Both (Same Amount)	37	11	29	16	20	11
Spanish	46	58	26	16	23	21
B. Metro						
English	0	11	7	22	30	24
Both (Same Amount)	57	60	50	36	25	18
Spanish	34	26	39	40	39	56

Table 6. Mexican American Youths' Self-Defined Abilities To Use Spanish by Gender and Type of Residence and Patterns of Use of the Language: South Texas, 1978-1979.

	Metro		Nonmetro	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
	----------% having Good Ability----------			
A. Good Use of Spanish				
Speaking	91	82	80	63
Reading	71	53	48	42
Writing	65	46	29	21
B. Mass Media Use of Spanish	----------% Using To Some Extent----------			
Radio	49	46	58	53
TV	50	67	23	32
Printed Materials	50	38	14	16
C. % Will Teach Children Spanish Well	89	89	97	58

boys more often than girls evaluated their Spanish abilities to be good: this gender variation was much stronger in the metro than the nonmetro setting. Regardless of gender or place of residence there was a pattern of progressive decline in evaluation of good ability from speaking, through reading, to writing which had the lowest ability evaluations.

These findings just reported on perceived ability to use Spanish might offer a clue to the differences previously noted between the 1973 and 1978 findings on metro - nonmetro patterns. Bilingual programs expanded in South Texas through the seventies and probably were introduced earliest and most widely in the metro areas. Over time this could explain why the 1973 pattern of greater use of Spanish by nonmetro respondents was not observable in 1978. On the other hand, this does not explain why the 1978 nonmetro respondents clearly used Spanish as the predominant language less than the 1973 nonmetro respondents. Of course, this might be explained by differences in the research methods used in the two studies or by differences in the localities used for study. But another possibility is that the passing of the "Chicano Movement" in the early seventies and an increased desire for assimilation aimed at social and economic mobility might have impacted for some reason more on the rural youth. Consequently, their tendency to be increasingly "assimilation - prone" makes them more reluctant to use Spanish now than was the case when "ethnic pride" and militancy were in vogue. One bit of startling evidence from the 1978-79 study offers a shred of support for this thesis - the dramatically lower proportions of Mexican American, nonmetro girls wanting to teach their children Spanish as compared with the others ("Part C", Table 6).

CLOSING REMARKS

This was an admitted bare-faced empirical, inductively organized attempt to produce some capability to generalize about the bilingual patterns used by metro and nonmetro Mexican American youth. Without question such an effort is severely hampered by the lack of metro - nonmetro comparative studies of Mexican American youth and the variability in time (5 years) and location of respondents used in the two sets of Texas data that were used. The variability in metro - nonmetro patterns of differneces observed and reported here from the two different studies caution against premature attempts at generalization and clearly point to a pressing need for more similarly comparative studies from which accumulative evidence can be codified to determine the levels of empirical generalization possible and to determine what factors might be involved as limiting conditions to these. Clearly, the issue of bilingualism among Mexican Americans is going to continue to be a major point of public concern and contention. And, it touches at the heart of the qualitative aspects of quality of life for Mexican Americans and their communities. To avoid basing arguments for or against public policy on erroneous beliefs about bilingualism among Mexican Americans, we must seek more empirically verified knowledge about the nature and diversity of these patterns.

Fortunately the NC-128 Research Project's "Subcommittee on Mexican American Populations" now has the data available to establish through interstate comparative analysis a more general description of metro - nonmetro patterns of language use among Mexican Americans: comparable comparative data from the same historical period is available from studies done in California, Colorado, Arizona, Texas and Michigan for both youth and adults. The potential value of such a broad array of empirical taps is obvious. Hopefully,

within the next year I will be able to report the results of a broad comparison of this data with the assistance of my collaborators in the NC-128 project.

In the meantime, we ask the readers of this to inform us of any similar comparative studies of this kind that we might not be aware of. And, to utilize the data reported here to challenge any premature beliefs about the nature of Mexican American youths' bilingual patterns in metro and nonmetro settings. I suspect that the truth is that there is much variability in these patterns: not only by regions and states, but by particular localities and even within these by class, nativity, and age status, and without doubt in terms of the "minority group orientation" (assimilation vrs. pluralism attitudes) of individuals (Kuvlesky, 1979, 1981).

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